

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Georgen, John and Adele, House

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 933 South Main Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Independence [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64050

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
[X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my  
opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered  
significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

4 April 2000  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [ ] entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].  
[ ] determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].  
[ ] determined not eligible for the  
National Register.  
[ ] removed from the  
National Register  
[ ] other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

## 5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district			
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0	objects
		1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

Number of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National  
Register.

N/A

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

### Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:  
Craftsman  
Prairie School

### Materials

foundation STONE: limestone  
walls STONE: limestone  
WOOD: shingle  
OTHER: masonite shingle  
roof OTHER: masonite shingle  
other CONCRETE

## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Periods of Significance

1908

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Significant Dates

1908

1915

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Significant Person(s)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Architect/Builder

Georgen, John and Adele/

William C. Howard, mason

Charles A. Doty, carpenter

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☒ Local Government

☐ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Jackson County Historical Society

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

A. Zone Easting Northing  
15 377600 4326440

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title see continuation sheet

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Bert Schwaller & Mary Costanzo-Schwaller

street & number 933 South Main Street telephone 816/836-4091

city or town Independence state Missouri zip code 64050

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Georgen, John & Adele, House  
Jackson County, Missouri

**Summary:** The Georgen House, 933 South Main Street, Independence, is a rectangular, two-story dwelling with a side-gabled roof and a full-width, one-story front porch. Constructed of angular pieces of unfinished limestone in circa 1908, the eclectic house displays elements that are characteristic of both the Craftsman and Prairie School traditions while the use of heavily rusticated stones with minimal mortar joints throughout imparts a massive, powerful quality. As a Craftsman house, the Georgen House exemplifies the Side-Gabled Roof subtype as defined by McAlester and McAlester.<sup>1</sup> The low-slung building's horizontality is enhanced by rows of windows and widely overhanging eaves which, along with a considerable amount of diamond-shaped glazing, are among its Prairie School elements. The gable ends feature wide, moderately projecting exterior chimneys that pierce the front half of the roof just below the ridge. A low hipped dormer is centered in the primary facade while a gabled dormer is in the rear. Diamond-pane and geometric glazing patterns are in abundance, and two attic window openings are themselves diamond-shaped. Alterations to the building's exterior have been limited primarily to the rear elevation where a recessed porch at the southeast corner was enclosed in circa 1915 and a one-story, two-room addition was constructed across the south two-thirds of the elevation in circa 1986. In connection with the later remodeling, a rear chimney and an upstairs sun porch and steps were removed and the roof and rear wall were sheathed with Masonite shingles. Since the alterations are limited to the rear while the three public facades and most of the first floor are essentially unchanged, the Georgen House retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Elaboration:** The Georgen House is located in a residential neighborhood comprised primarily of late 19th and early 20th century single-family dwellings. Situated deep on a spacious (102' x 203') lot, the west-facing house is approached by a long, private walk that stretches the length of the property toward South Main Street. A concrete driveway from South Main Street follows the north property line before curving south to a detached carport that sits just east of the house. A wood privacy fence extends along portions of the east and south property lines. Circa 1908 photographs indicate that historically the property was surrounded by mature trees, a few of which remain along the west and south property lines. Most of the original trees have been replaced with new plantings.

The Georgen House rests on a limestone foundation measuring approximately 35' x 38.5'. The house's load-bearing walls and porch supports are constructed of angular pieces of stacked limestone that have been skillfully assembled to minimize the visibility of the mortar joints, a type of construction that is apparently unique in Independence.<sup>2</sup> Only the rear (east) exterior wall, originally sided with wood shingles, and the circa 1915 addition are of frame construction.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp. 452-463.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the use of dimension limestone in the Georgen House, see Section 8, pp. 9-10.

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Because of maintenance concerns, cornice returns at both gable ends were reinforced, enclosed, and sheathed with Masonite during the circa 1986 remodeling. The soffits, originally veneered with painted beadboard, have been replaced with narrow tongue-and-groove boards which resemble the historic material.<sup>3</sup>

The symmetrical main (west) elevation is divided into three bays. A one-story Craftsman style front porch with a flat, concrete slab roof extends across the facade. The porch is supported by four massive, square columns that rise from grade and extend approximately three feet above the roof plane. Constructed of stacked stones like other load-bearing components of the house, the columns are connected in the front by a continuous stone railing that begins at ground level and extends along both sides. The railing is unbroken by the porch floor. At the porch center, five concrete steps ascend to the concrete deck. The steps are flanked on each side by extensions of the stone railing. The porch ceiling consists of molded wood trim forming a geometric pattern of alternating rectangles.

The middle bay contains the primary entrance, comprised of a single paneled door flanked by four-light leaded glass sidelights. The door is glazed with one large vertical pane of beveled glass. A massive limestone lintel rests above the entry. Inset in the two flanking bays are groupings of three-ribbon windows. Within each set, a fixed central window with wooden muntins and diamond pane glazing is flanked on each side by a pair of casement windows. The casement windows are also divided by wooden muntins, creating a somewhat simpler geometric design. The window sets are bracketed by massive limestone lintels and sills.

The second story mirrors the first in its arrangement of elements but not in their design. A central paneled door, much narrower than its counterpart on the first floor, with a single pane of beveled glass and diamond pane sidelights, accesses the porch roof from the upstairs hallway. To each side of the doorway, and positioned directly above the triple windows on the first floor, is a set of four ribbon casement windows with wooden muntins and diamond pane glazing. The three second floor openings are capped with limestone lintels. The original wood storm windows and doors have been maintained on both floors of the main facade.

Centered in the roof is a low-slung hipped-roof dormer for the attic. The dormer front has four small rectangular casement windows with wood muntins and diamond-shaped glazing. The shallow dormer walls and roof are sided with Masonite shingles. The dormer displays a boxed cornice and wide eaves sheathed with narrow, painted tongue-and-groove siding.

Unlike the symmetrical west facade, the north and south facades are asymmetrical in their arrangement of details. Massive stacked-limestone chimneys that rise from the ground up through the roof west of the ridge line are a dominant feature at both gable ends. Like window

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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openings in the primary facade, window openings in the north and south walls are inset with massive limestone lintels and sills.

On the first story of the north facade, double-hung 9/1 windows are found on each side of the stone chimney. At the east end, the kitchen space is defined by three much shorter double-hung windows, a single unit and a pair, all 6/1s. These windows are set high in the kitchen wall, approximately five feet above grade. On the second story of the north facade, fenestration seems random with both 9/1 and 6/1 double-hung sash in the eastern bays, a 9/1 double-hung sash directly east of the chimney, and a fixed two-light window at the far west edge. Centered below the ridge, providing light and ventilation to the attic, is a pair of nine-light casement windows with wooden muntins.

The more ornate south facade has diamond-shaped and segmentally arched window openings as well as those with flat arches. The two segmentally arched openings containing three-pane hinged windows flank the chimney base and the basement level. On the first floor, positioned directly above these basement light wells, are two double-hung 9/1 windows. At the east end where an original recessed back porch was enclosed in circa 1915, a double-hung 9/1 sash has replaced the boxed opening of the porch wall. The original limestone lintel above the opening is intact. On the second story, a double-hung 9/1 window is positioned west of the chimney stack. On the east side of the chimney is a four-unit "ribbon" of casement windows with wooden muntins and diamond pane glazing. Two diamond-shaped openings, located on either side of the chimney, each contain a casement window containing wooden muntins and nine diamond-shaped lights. Like their rectangular counterparts in the north facade, these windows provide light and ventilation for the attic.

The rear (east) elevation of the Georgen House was altered in circa 1915 with the enclosure of a one-story, recessed back porch and the construction of a one-story, two-room, L-shape addition along the south half of the wall. The frame addition is sided with wood shingles on the south and east. On the north, the original shingles have been removed and replaced with painted wood batten siding. Wooden foldout doors were added to the north wall in circa 1986, when the addition was adapted for use as a storage unit. On the addition's south and east walls, double-hung 6/1 sash are paired in groups of two and three. The nearly-flat roof over the addition is sheathed in asphalt. North of the addition is an original doorway that provides access to the kitchen, but the original door and transom have been replaced. North of this doorway, what had been the building's third wide stone chimney was removed in connection with remodeling. Upstairs, an original double-hung 9/1 window with patterned leaded glass sidelights in the central bay is flanked by paired double-hung 1/1 windows which are replacements. An exterior second floor doorway, sun porch and stair wall also were removed in connection with the circa 1986 work.

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Projecting from the center of the roof is the larger of the building's two dormers. Three modern double-hung sash are replacements of the original dormer windows. Two small fixed windows have also been added on each of the dormer's side walls. The dormer's walls and roof are sided with Masonite shingles. The dormer roof displays a boxed cornice and wide eaves sheathed with narrow tongue-and-groove siding.

The interior of the Georgen House is organized around a central stair hall. On the first floor, a formal living room and modern office area (originally a recessed back porch) lies south of the center hall. On the opposite north side are the formal dining room and rear kitchen area. A second stairwell on the south side of the kitchen provides access to a full basement and servants quarters. The second floor houses the family sleeping quarters, with a large master bedroom (originally two smaller rooms) on the south and two bedrooms, separated in the middle by a bath, on the north. Historically used as the servants quarters, the floor plan of the attic story has been altered. The present layout has a large family room in the center, with a bedroom in each gable end.

Complementing the imposing character of its exterior, the Georgen House is lavish in its display of interior details. Beginning on the first floor, the original oak tongue-and-groove flooring has been maintained in the entry hall, living room and dining room. Walls and ceilings are plaster, trimmed throughout in details typical of the Craftsman tradition. Original room openings have been maintained and are also trimmed in wood. Wide lintel boards, with a modest applied molding, cap each opening. Except for the kitchen, all first floor woodwork retains its original varnish.

Flanking each side of the foyer, just inside the main entry, are a pair of Doric columns constructed of quarter sawn oak. The columns rest on eight inch pedestals that provide support for the large oak lintel above. Three boxed oak beams, equally spaced and oriented horizontally across the width of the hall, demonstrate a traditional Craftsman ceiling treatment. This same beam system is carried over into the formal living and dining rooms. The primary staircase is located toward the east end of the central hall and is open on the north. An original Craftsman influenced newel post, square with wood panels, rests on a curved tread at the base of the stairway. Twelve steps ascend to a second floor landing where a second newel post of the same design is intact. Turning west, a short set of steps ascends to the second floor hall where a third post turns the stair rail back south, connecting at the wall. The stair rail between the first and second floor landings uses a system of wood panels combined with a geometric pattern of open fretwork above. From the landing to the second floor hall, a much simpler railing design using square spindles with a single horizontal cross bar between is employed.

A large opening on the south side of the main hall provides passage into the formal living room. In contrast to the main entry and dining room, the living room trim is all cherry-stained poplar. Dominating the south wall of the room is an impressive masonry fireplace, faced with irregular



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coursed ashlar cut limestone. A fireplace hood consisting of three large stones hovers over a brick firebox trimmed with alternating rectangular ceramic tiles. A smooth wooden board rests on a limestone slab which serves as a mantel shelf. A narrow doorway in the east wall of the living room, which originally led to a recessed porch at the southeast corner of the rear elevation, is still intact. A wood paneled door, using 14 square panes of glass, is flanked high on each side by a pair of leaded glass windows patterned with an identical geometric design. Enclosed in circa 1915, the original porch is now used as a home office.

On the north side of the main hall, quarter-sawn oak paneled pocket doors lead into the formal dining room in the northwest corner of the house. The Craftsman tradition is evident in the treatment of the dining room walls where a simple paneled wainscoting, finished with a nine-inch baseboard and a five-inch plate rail, wraps around all four sides and extends approximately two-thirds up the wall surfaces. The upper third is plaster. A large stone fireplace, with a brick firebox and a ceramic tile hearth, is centered in the north wall. Constructed of pieces of rough-cut limestone in a random pattern, this fireplace displays a smooth, quarter-sawn oak mantel on a limestone slab. A built-in window seat is extant below a window group in the west wall.

The kitchen is entered off the dining room through a doorway in the north end of the east wall. Despite changes and repairs over the years, the kitchen retains its original windows, interior doors and trim. Additionally, a utility chase that housed the original plumbing pipes in the north wall is intact. Although modern in design, the new elements that have been introduced--cabinets, lighting and lightly-textured wall surfaces--are reasonably sympathetic to the character of the house. Recessed areas on the south end of the kitchen accommodate doorways to both the servant's stairway and to the present basement stairwell which was originally a closet. A doorway at the southwest corner of the kitchen leads back to the main hall.

At the east end of the entry hall below the main stairway, a modern bathroom occupies space said to originally have been used as a "mud" room. Located north of the original recessed porch, this room retains an exterior doorway in the south wall containing a wooden door with a single, large pane of glass above recessed panels. In the west wall, a small built-in closet retains its original paneled door and hardware. A double-hung window was once located in the east wall where a modern sink has been installed.

The one-story east addition, constructed in circa 1915 as two bedrooms, is used for storage and is no longer accessible from the interior. While their historic function has not been preserved, many original elements are still in place in these rooms including wood trim, windows and light fixtures.

The second floor of the Georgen House had been substantially remodeled before the current owners returned much of it to its original plan. Historically there were two rooms on the south side of the central hall but a partition wall between them has been removed to create the present

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master suite. A stone fireplace, similar in construction and design to those on the main floor, is intact in the south wall but has been painted white. Two modern closets with double-doors have been added at the east end of the suite, as has a pair of French doors which are offset west of center on the north wall. Except where reproduction was necessary, all of the original wood trim is intact. On the north side of the central hall, two bedrooms are separated in the middle by a bath. The bedroom on the west has a stone fireplace with simple rectangular ceramic tile trim around a red brick firebox. Both bedrooms have retained their original wood trim and closet doors. The bathroom is in the process of renovation; all historic fabric had previously been removed. New carpet flooring and modern light fixtures have been installed throughout.

The attic story of the Georgen House was historically used for both servant's quarters and storage. Originally the space was divided into two rooms: a servant's living area in the west dormer end, and a much larger open storage and work area. By the time the current owner acquired the property, these rooms had been gutted of the interior wall and room treatments. The current floor plan uses a center family room with one bedroom on either side. Where possible, doors and wood trim that are original to the house have been used. Flooring, wall and ceiling materials are new, but remain sensitive to the character of the house.

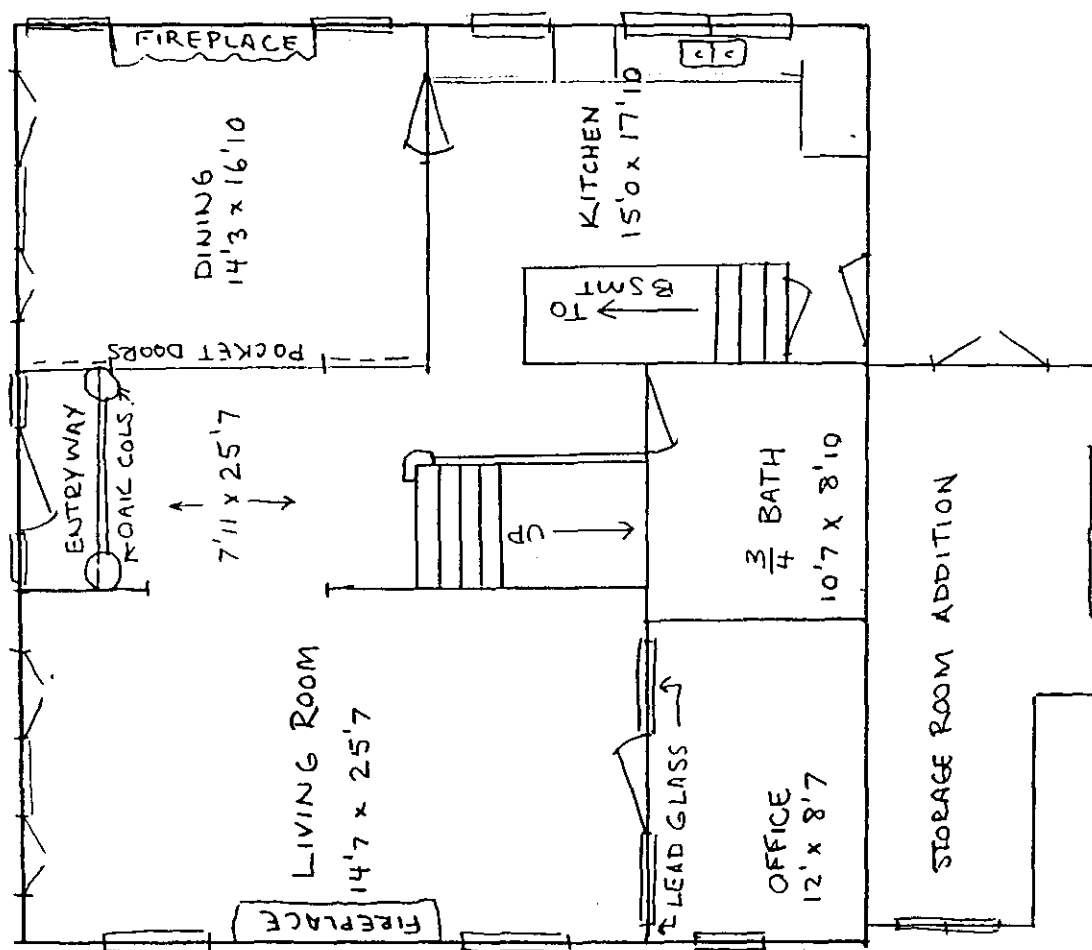
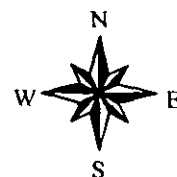
Overall, alterations to the Georgen House have had only minimal impact on the historic integrity of both the original 1908 house and the circa 1915 addition. On the exterior, only the rear elevation has experienced significant change. While the removal of a third stone chimney and the alteration of window openings is unfortunate, the fact that these changes occurred in the rear of the house has not significantly compromised the overall integrity of the building's historic design and feeling. The modern detached carport, also in the rear, is small in scale and removable; it is therefore not included in the resource count. The application of Masonite shingles to the roof and rear facade is also reversible. On the interior, only minor alterations including changes in paint color and replacement light fixtures have impacted the primary area consisting of the living room, dining room, foyer and stair hall. Adaptation of the kitchen and first floor bathroom to allow for the conveniences of modern living is primarily limited to the addition of modern fixtures and cabinetry and has not impacted the floor plan or the placement of walls and door openings. Interiors of the second floor and attic have experienced some alteration of the floor plan, including the removal of an interior wall on the south half of the second floor for the creation of a master bedroom suite and the addition of a bedroom in each gable end of the attic. However, the features that are most integral to an understanding of the building's architectural style (including trim, the pattern of window and door openings, fireplace ornamentation and stairway treatment) have remained intact. Today the Georgen House, rendered in heavily rusticated stones, still effectively displays its original appearance with strong Craftsman and Prairie School affinities.

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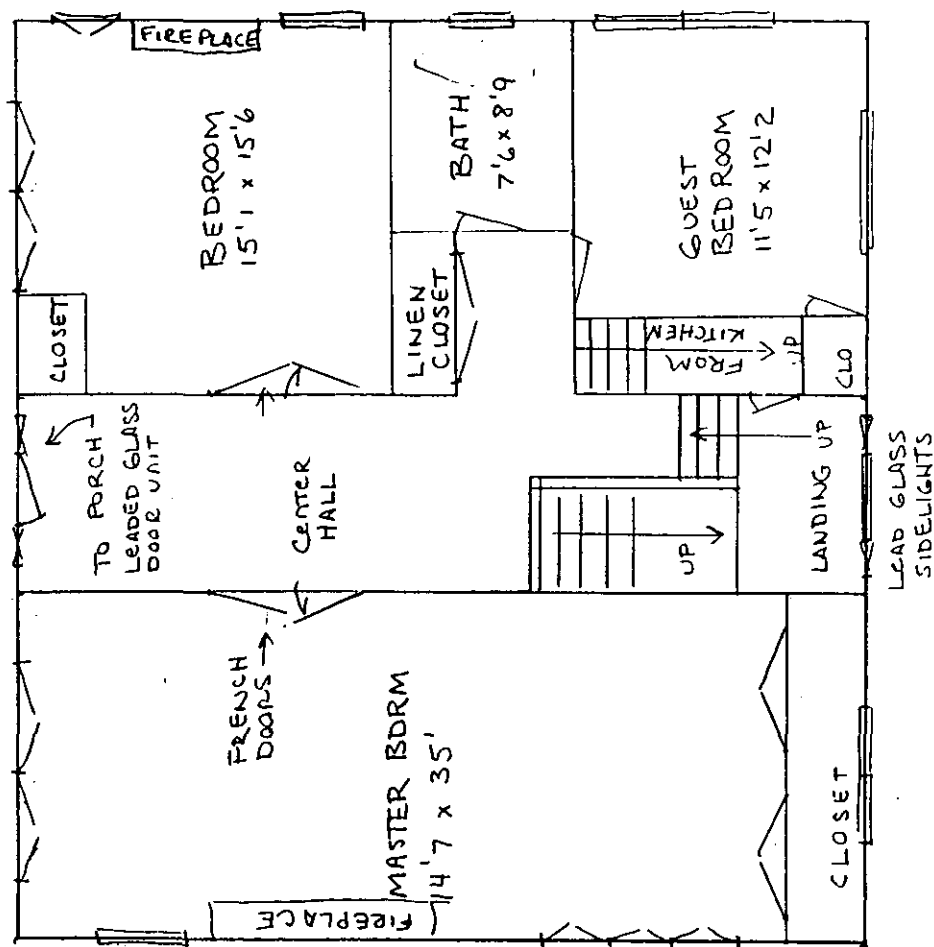
First Floor Plan  
John & Adele Georgen House  
933 South Main, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri

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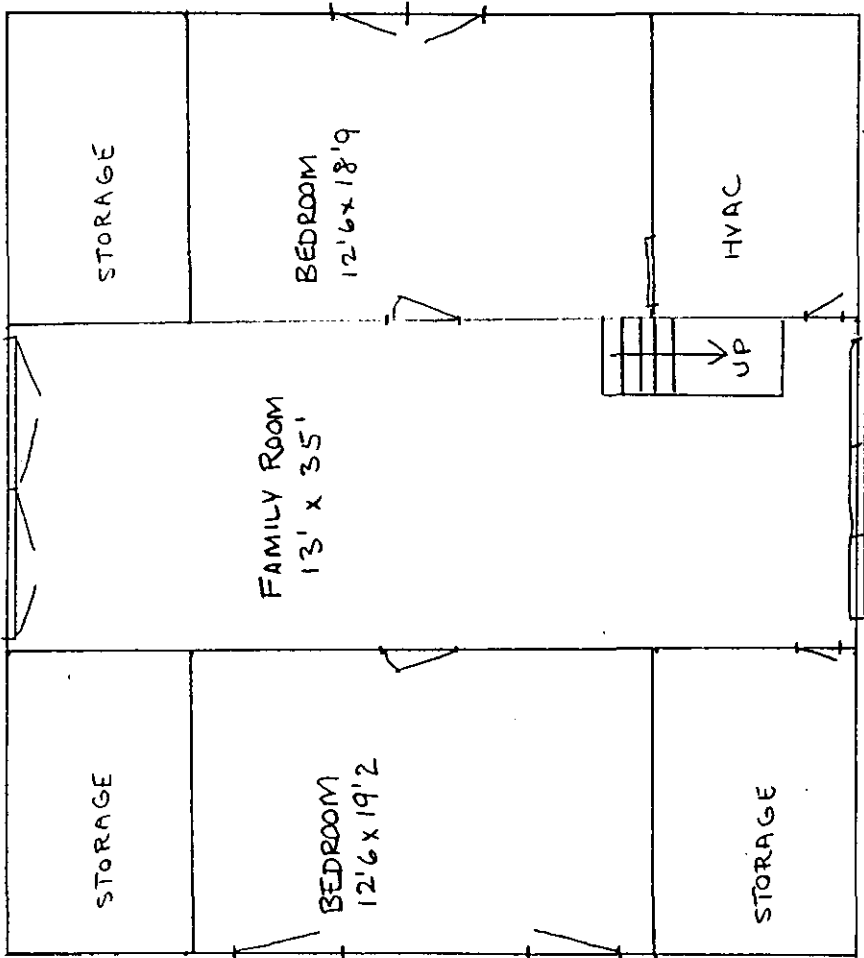
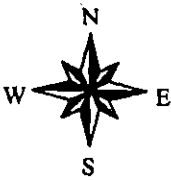
Second Floor Plan  
John & Adele Georgen House  
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Third Floor Plan  
John & Adele Georgen House  
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**SUMMARY:** Constructed in circa 1908, the Georgen House, 933 South Main Street, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as a distinctive example of early 20th century stone house construction in Independence, Missouri. Although eclectic in its display of architectural influences, the Georgen House most strongly exemplifies a local adaptation of the Craftsman and Prairie School styles, both of which were emerging at the time of its construction. The dimensionally rough surface treatment of its imposing stonework is noteworthy both aesthetically and in terms of craftsmanship. The locally quarried limestone used in its construction was a popular natural building material throughout the Kansas City area well into the 20th century, although the dry-stacked look of the Georgen House is apparently unique in Independence.<sup>4</sup> Appropriately, as used in the Georgen House, the stone serves to draw closer the relationship between the house and the ground from which it appears to emerge. The house was designed by its original owners, John and Adele Georgen, in circa 1904-1908.<sup>5</sup> The Georgens were well-established in Independence and Kansas City society and the house's assertive design reflects not only their status but also their interest in and interpretation of newly introduced architectural styles. The period of significance, 1908, reflects the date of construction.

**ELABORATION/Historical Background:** The economic and emotional devastation resulting from the Civil War, Order Number Eleven in particular, seriously crippled Independence in its effort to keep pace with the growth of nearby Kansas City. By the late 1870s, however, many displaced families had reestablished their homesteads and businesses and Independence was experiencing at least moderate growth. As Kansas City evolved into a major commercial center, the demand for regional housing and transportation increased and Independence was close enough to benefit. A boulevard connection to Kansas City was constructed in circa 1885, enabling citizens to commute to work and business there while making their homes in the more tranquil suburbs. With development of this corridor, Independence land values tripled and a building boom resulted in the late 1880s. Longtime Independence residents who had maintained their wealth and holdings through the period of war and recovery constructed large, fashionable homes in elaborate park-like settings. Many wealthy Kansas Citians followed suit, and Independence became known regionally as the "Royal Suburb of Kansas City."<sup>6</sup> As the 1888-1889 Directory of Independence put it:

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<sup>4</sup> In a 1975 architectural survey identifying 431 Independence buildings as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the Georgen House was the only example using a dimensionally rough surface treatment with the appearance of dry-stacked natural stone. While the survey was less than comprehensive, no other properties of similar construction are known to exist in Independence.

<sup>5</sup> According to Mrs. Francis Poindexter, a daughter of the Georgens, her parents acted as the architects/designers of the family home at 933 South Main Street. Correspondence and other family records and billing invoices maintained by the Jackson County Historical Society indicate that John Georgen also served as general contractor on the project, with William C. Howard and Charles A. Doty of Kansas City hired as stonemason and carpenter, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Bernd Foerster, Independence, Missouri. Independence, Missouri: Independence Press, 1978, p.55.

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"The fine residences that have been erected show conclusively that in the near future the more prominent business men of Kansas City will make their homes in what will then be the more retired and aristocratic section of this city. Here they can bring up their children somewhat removed from the contaminating influence of the city and where they themselves can enjoy their homes of rest removed from the hum drum of city life."<sup>7</sup>

During this period, the neighborhood where the Georgen House would be constructed some two decades later became integrated into the overall pattern of community development. Located on the southern boundary of Old Town Independence (platted in 1827), the land along South Main Street had until this time remained somewhat rural in character, serving primarily as the principal wagon route between Lee's Summit and Independence. With the building boom of the late 1880s, however, the land was subdivided, a paved roadbed was laid, city water lines were installed and South Main Street soon became more urban than rural.<sup>8</sup> As the "Royal Suburb" grew, the large homes constructed on South Main Street reflected the architectural styles of the period. Probably more than any other section of the city, South Main Street with its deep grassy lots and tree-lined walks demonstrated the feeling of stately elegance that characterized Independence beginning in the late 19th century.

After a lull resulting from the national recession of the 1890s, an expansion of industrialization led to a democratization of wealth and the creation of a larger body of working class citizens in Independence. As the century turned, more people had more money and many new but more modest houses were constructed. As newly subdivided parcels were developed, South Main Street and other Independence neighborhoods lost many of their spacious lots to infill construction and the city's "Royal Suburb" image gradually faded.<sup>9</sup> The circa 1908 Georgen House seems to bridge this transitional period, witnessing both the end of an era characterized by suburban maturity and the dawn of another era focused on neighborhood and community consolidation.

John and Adele Georgen were well-known social figures in both Independence and Kansas City, and the house which they personally designed at 933 South Main Street reflected both their social standing and their apparent interest in emerging architectural styles. Clearly, the imposing setting and powerful yet fashionable design of the Georgen House represented a continuation of the development patterns that distinguished Independence during the "Royal Suburb" era. The use of a rectangular floor plan and relatively restrained Craftsman and Prairie School styling, however,

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<sup>7</sup> Directory of Independence, including Lee's Summit and Blue Springs for 1888-1889. Kansas City, Missouri: R. S. Dillon & Co., 1888, unpgd.

<sup>8</sup> Foerster, op cit., p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Foerster, op cit., pp. 89-91.

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Georgen, John & Adele, House  
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suggested the emphasis on practicality and sensibility that would characterize much American architecture in the years of consolidation to follow. Preserved in its basic form and original setting, the Georgen House still conveys these historic associations.

The Georgens earned their standing on South Main Street through a combination of inheritance and hard work. John Georgen was born in Weston, Missouri, on August 7, 1867. His parents were Louis and Azubah Skinner Georgen. He spent his boyhood in Platte City and was graduated from law school in 1887. Beginning in the office of Judge Henry N. Ess, Georgen practiced law for 67 years and became a well-known member of the bar in Kansas City as well as Independence. When he died in 1957 at the age of 90, he was the oldest living member of the Kansas City Bar Association.<sup>10</sup>

Adele Bryant Georgen was the daughter W. L. Bryant, a third generation member of the distinguished Bryant family of Independence and a prominent Jackson County citizen. Adele was born on March 29, 1872 on the old Bryant Homestead, just a few parcels north of where she and her husband John would later build their home on South Main Street. Well known in local society, Mrs. Georgen organized and acted as hostess at various community events, was active in philanthropy and worked in education by representing a number of prominent girls' schools. She died in 1963 at the age of 91.<sup>11</sup>

John Georgen and Adele Bryant married on April 3, 1894 and moved to Independence. A circa 1905 city directory indicates that the Georgens resided at 811 South Main Street, the home of Adele's father, until their house was completed. The Georgens are said to have designed the house themselves, with John Georgen also serving as general contractor. William C. Howard was hired by the Georgens as a stonemason and Charles A. Doty was hired for carpentry work. So far no connection has been made between Howard or Doty, both Kansas Citians, and other buildings in Independence. Construction on the Georgen House apparently began in 1904, but for reasons unknown was not completed until 1908.<sup>12</sup>

**ELABORATION/Architecture:** While the Georgen House is a good local example of a house with both Craftsman and Prairie School influences, it is perhaps most significant as a local interpretation of a type of limestone construction involving heavily rusticated, lozenge-shaped stones. Because the stones were stacked with minimal mortar joints, very plastic wall surfaces were created. So effective was the result that to the casual observer, it almost seems as if individual stones are on the verge of toppling to the ground. Of course, the house which has always looked much as it does today has been standing quietly and securely since circa 1908.

<sup>10</sup> "John Georgen is Dead: A Lawyer Here Many Years," The Kansas City Star, June 24, 1957, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed obituary for Adele Bryant Georgen, see Independent Magazine, July 20, 1963.

<sup>12</sup> The Kansas City Star, June 24, 1957, op cit., and Mrs. Francis Poindexter, op cit.



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This unusual building method is not unknown in Kansas City but it is virtually unprecedented in Independence architecture of the Eclectic or any other period, as determined by a 1975 historic resources survey to identify properties worthy of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To date, no other buildings exhibiting this type and degree of dry-stacked stone construction have been identified in Independence.<sup>13</sup>

Because the Georgen House employs load-bearing stone as its primary structural system, this further distinguishes it from the vast majority of other Independence residences. By 1900, technological advances and the development of new materials had significantly diminished the use of solid masonry construction nationwide. The introduction of balloon and platform framing allowed buildings to be erected quickly and, if stone was the material of choice, to be sheathed in veneer slabs that required considerably less of it.<sup>14</sup> Historically, while many local quarries and natural rock outcroppings provided the limestone used in Independence, most applications were limited to such things as retaining walls, chimneys, porch walls, sills and lintels, rather than for load-bearing walls. Few Independence houses demonstrate the lavish display of stone that characterizes the Georgen House, regardless of the construction method employed.

Also, the distinctive stonework of the Georgen House attests to the significant role its owners played in its construction. Seemingly unrestrained financially or otherwise, John and Adele Georgen obviously envisioned a house that would be worthy of its location on South Main Street while also representative of its own time. Indicative of their progressive natures, the Georgens selected elements of the Craftsman and Prairie School styles which were just coming into vogue. Although perhaps somewhat naive in its interpretation, the unusual stacked-stone construction of the Georgen House also represents an attempt to individualize these styles while holding true to the academic principles behind them. The manner in which the stones appear to emerge from the ground was perhaps how the Georgens interpreted Frank Lloyd Wright's belief that a building should appear to grow organically from its site, while the use of heavily rusticated stones effectively emphasized the beauty and honesty of a natural material as espoused not only by Wright but by the English Arts and Crafts movement from which the Craftsman style was developed in America.<sup>15</sup> Gustav Stickley, perhaps America's best known promoter of Craftsman homes, supported the use of cobblestones "for drawing closer the relationship between house and

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<sup>13</sup> The 1975 Independence survey, which identified 431 potentially eligible buildings, is on file at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of how the use of dimension stone changed, see the Senate Report of the Geological Survey and the Missouri Division of Geological Survey and Water Resources, Mineral and Water Resources of Missouri, 1967, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, The Natural House. New York: Horizon Press, 1954 (Mentor Book edition, 1963), pp. 13-30.

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Georgen, John & Adele, House  
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ground” and presumably would have been impressed by the Georgen House where the effect was even stronger because of its dry-stacked stone construction.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the use of natural materials, other defining characteristics of these styles as represented in the Georgen House include an emphasis on horizontal lines, a low-pitched gabled roof with widely overhanging eaves, bands of windows with diamond-shaped glazing and porch columns extending to the ground. While the form of the Georgen House is predominantly Craftsman-influenced, exposed rafter ends and decorative beams or braces which are often a defining feature of the Craftsman style are, however, absent. Significant interior features include rustic stone fireplaces, built-in window seats, wainscoting and beamed ceilings.

While several other Independence properties identified in the 1975 survey represent adaptations of the Craftsman and Prairie styles as rendered in stone, these buildings do not show the same consideration for the use of stone in its natural state as does the Georgen House. For example, the circa 1910 Clyde Norfleet House at 127 East Kansas Avenue was designed using a randomly shaped, oversize limestone veneer. But the combination of its various design elements including visible mortar joints, concrete porch supports cast in the form of tree trunks, segmental arch balustrade and red clay tile roof give the building a stylized appearance that is altogether different than the more natural facade of the Georgen House. Unlike the Georgen House, most of Independence's other Eclectic houses rendered in stone use it in the form of random-patterned, ashlar-cut veneers that created a highly finished appearance. Most of these properties were constructed from circa 1905-1920, using locally quarried dimension limestone. Use of this material faded with the advent of concrete, which began to rival dimension stone for certain building functions as early as the early 1900s.<sup>17</sup>

The John and Adele Georgen House continues to serve as a single family residence; its current owners are intent on maintaining and preserving this unique dwelling for the future. It is a fine example of popular early twentieth century styles eclectically adapted to local materials and tastes. Highly intact, it retains its primary character defining features and is a testament to the progressive thinking of the Georgens and the craftsmanship of its builders.

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<sup>16</sup> Gustav Stickley, Craftsman Homes. Avenel, New Jersey: Gramercy Books, 1995 [reprint edition], p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> Toni M. Prawl, The Dimension Limestone Industry in Kansas City, Missouri, 1880-1950, Missouri Department of Transportation report, 1997.

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National Park Service

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Georgen, John & Adele, House  
Jackson County, Missouri

**Biography**

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Personal interview. Bert & Mary Schwaller, current owners, and Mary Sayers. Numerous dates, 1998.

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National Park Service

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Georgen, John & Adele, House  
Jackson County, Missouri

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Verbal boundary description

The nominated property is located in Block 4 of the Clarendon Place Subdivision, in the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri and contains all of Lot 11, the northern 40 feet of Lot 10, and the southern 14 feet of Lot 12.

Verbal boundary justification

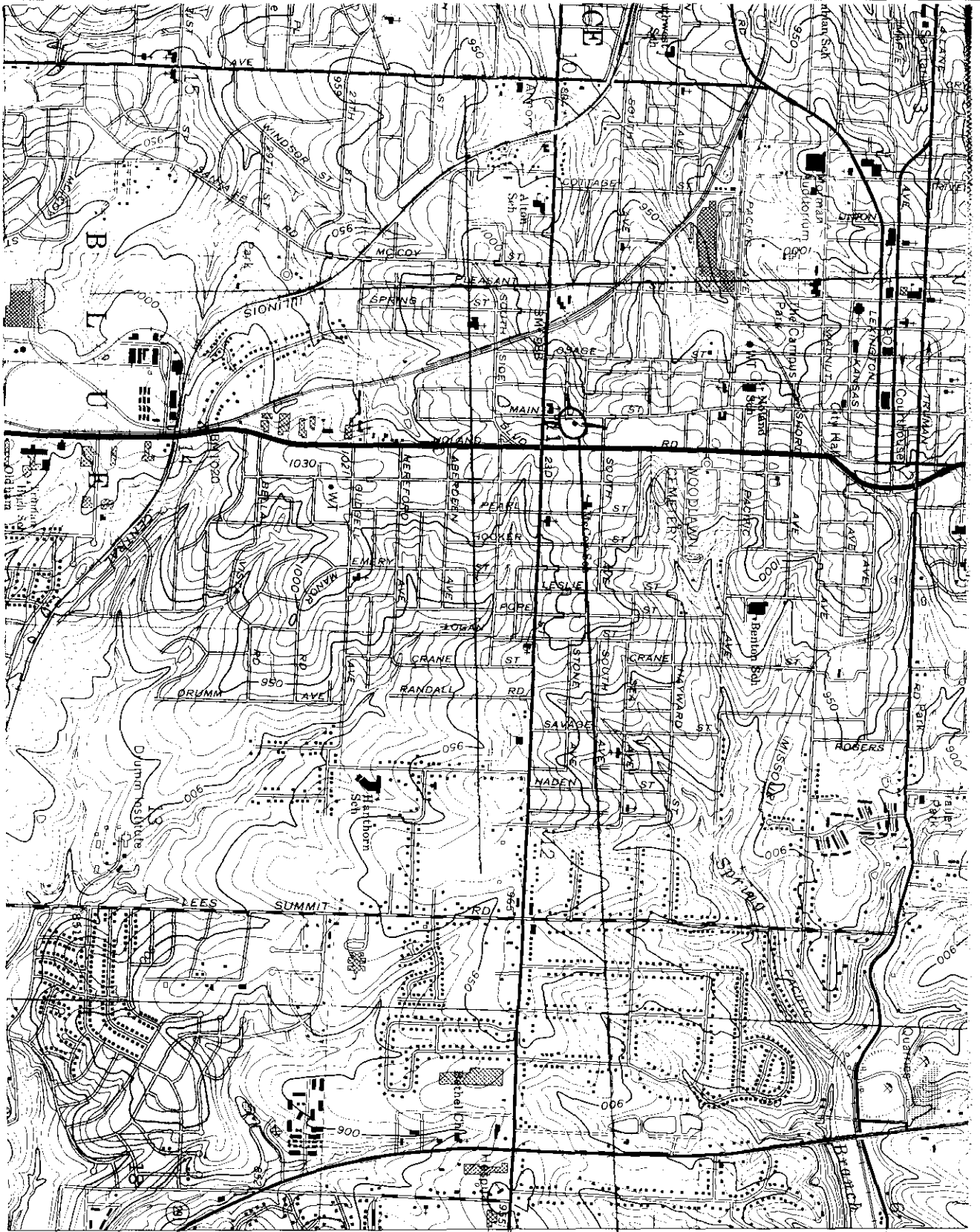
The property nominated includes those portions of the parcel historically associated with the Georgen House that were transferred with the building to its current owners.

Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Costanzo-Schwaller  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 1, 1999  
street & number 933 South Main Street telephone 816/836-4091  
city or town Independence state MO zip code 64050

name/title Roger Maserang, Historian  
organization Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program date April 3, 2000  
street & number P.O. Box 176 telephone (573) 751-0504  
city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65102

name/title Mary Sayers  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date March 5, 1999  
street & number 933 Janssen Place telephone 912/344-1096  
816/753-0866  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64109



(BLUE SPRINGS)  
7162 III SE 2.5 MI. TO U.S. 40

5 MI. TO MO. 7

2.9 MI. TO MO. 78

John and Acile Georgan  
House  
Jackson County MO  
UTM  
15/4326440/377600

JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

3/4 VIEW, LOOKING NE

PHOTO # 1



JOHN GEORGE HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAVERS - PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1992

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

MAIN FACADE, LOOKING E  
PHOTO #2

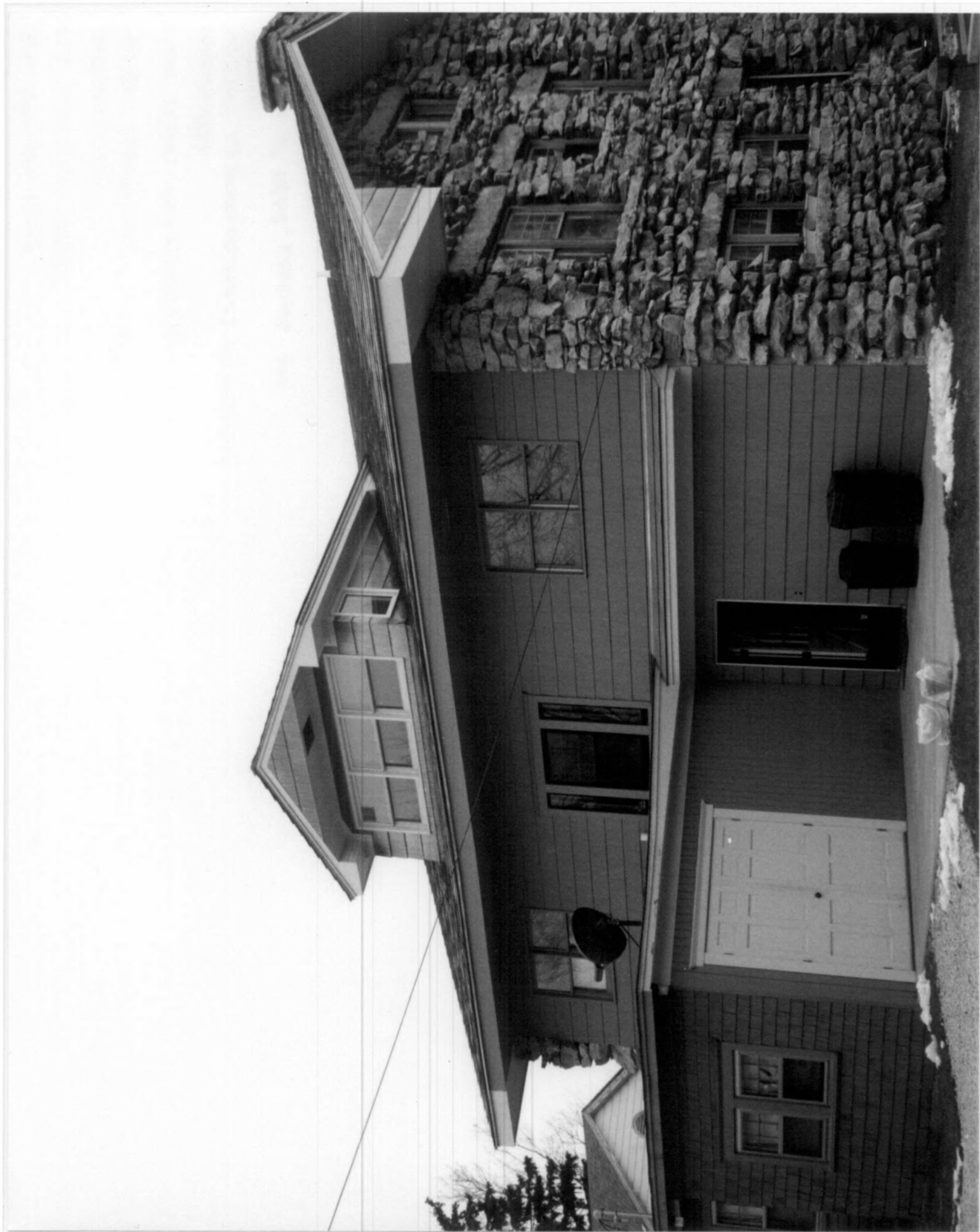




TOM GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER  
(MARCH, 1998)  
NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

3/4 VIEW OF REAR, LOOKING SW  
PHOTO #3



JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS- PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

VIEW OF HALL AND STAIRWAY, LOOKING EAST  
PHOTO #4

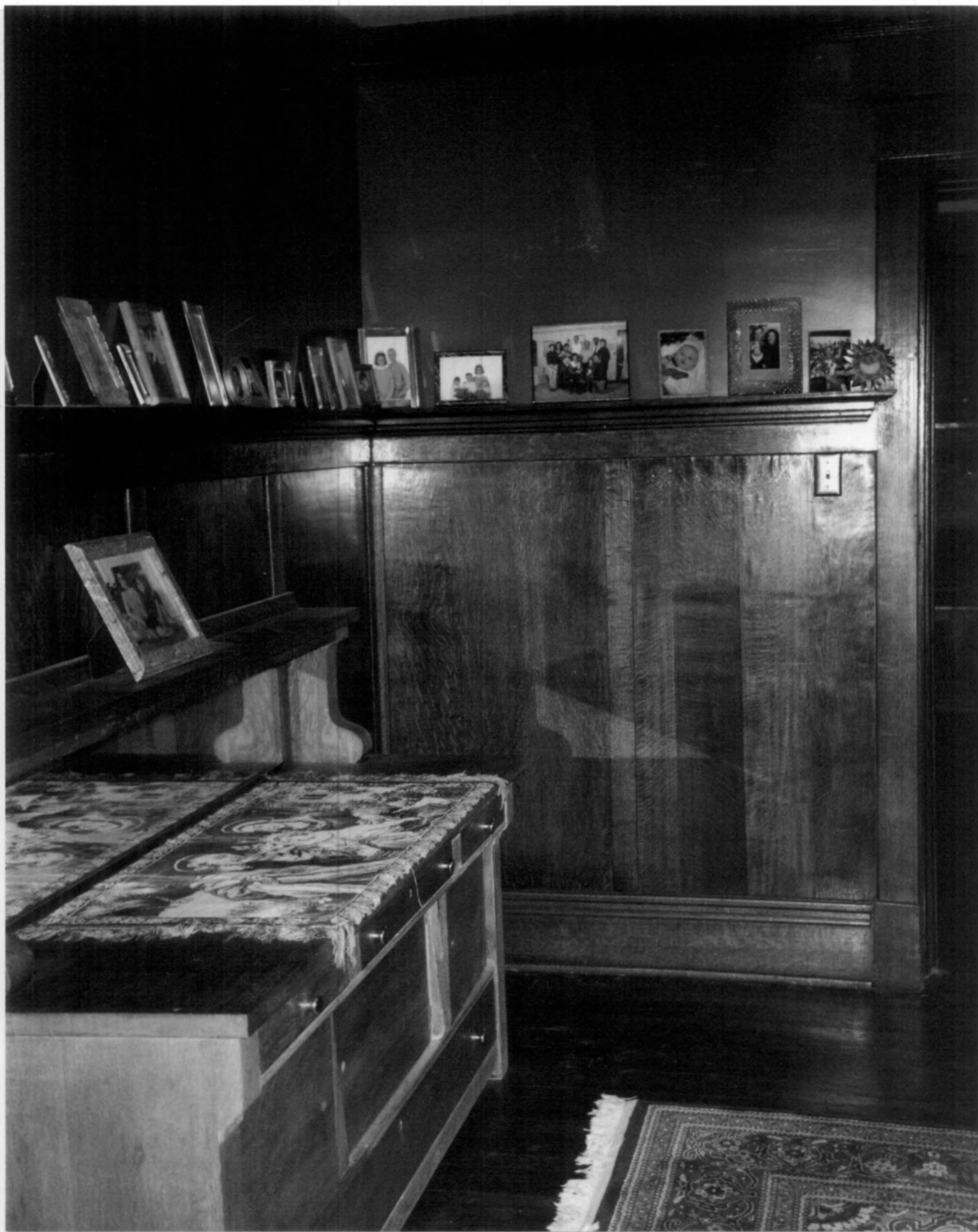


JOHN GEORGE HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAVERS PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION  
SE CORNER OF DINING ROOM, LOOKING SE  
PHOTO # 5



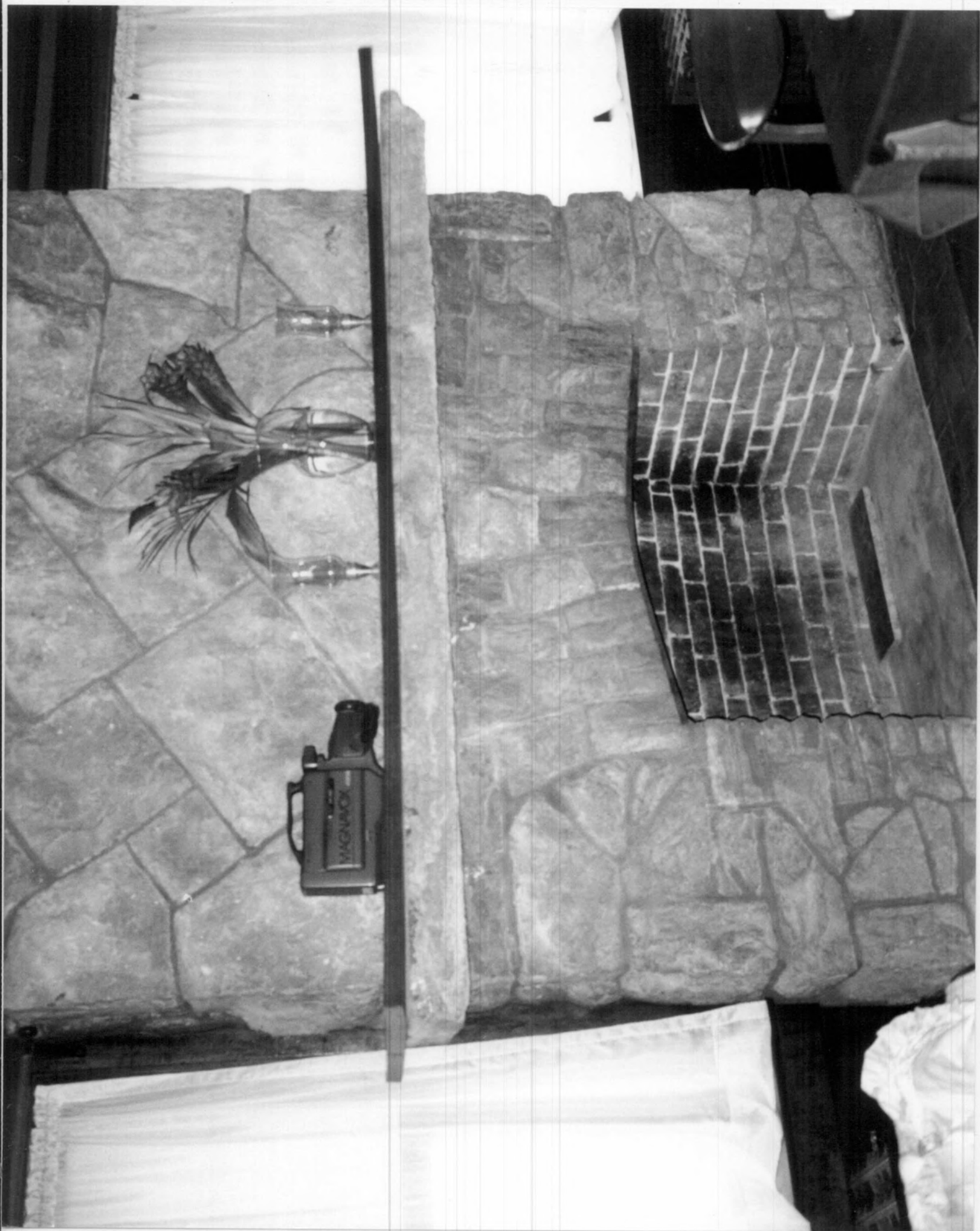


JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE  
JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION  
FIREPLACE IN DINING ROOM, LOOKING N/E  
PHOTO #6





JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET

INDEPENDENCE

JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER

MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

RADIATOR, LOOKING NE

PHOTO #7



JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
933 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE

JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER

MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION

E WALL OF LIVING ROOM, LOOKING EAST

PHOTO #8





JOHN GEORGEN HOUSE  
923 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
INDEPENDENCE

JACKSON COUNTY, MO

MARY SAYERS - PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARCH, 1998

NEGATIVE IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S POSSESSION  
FIREPLACE IN LIVING ROOM, LOOKING S

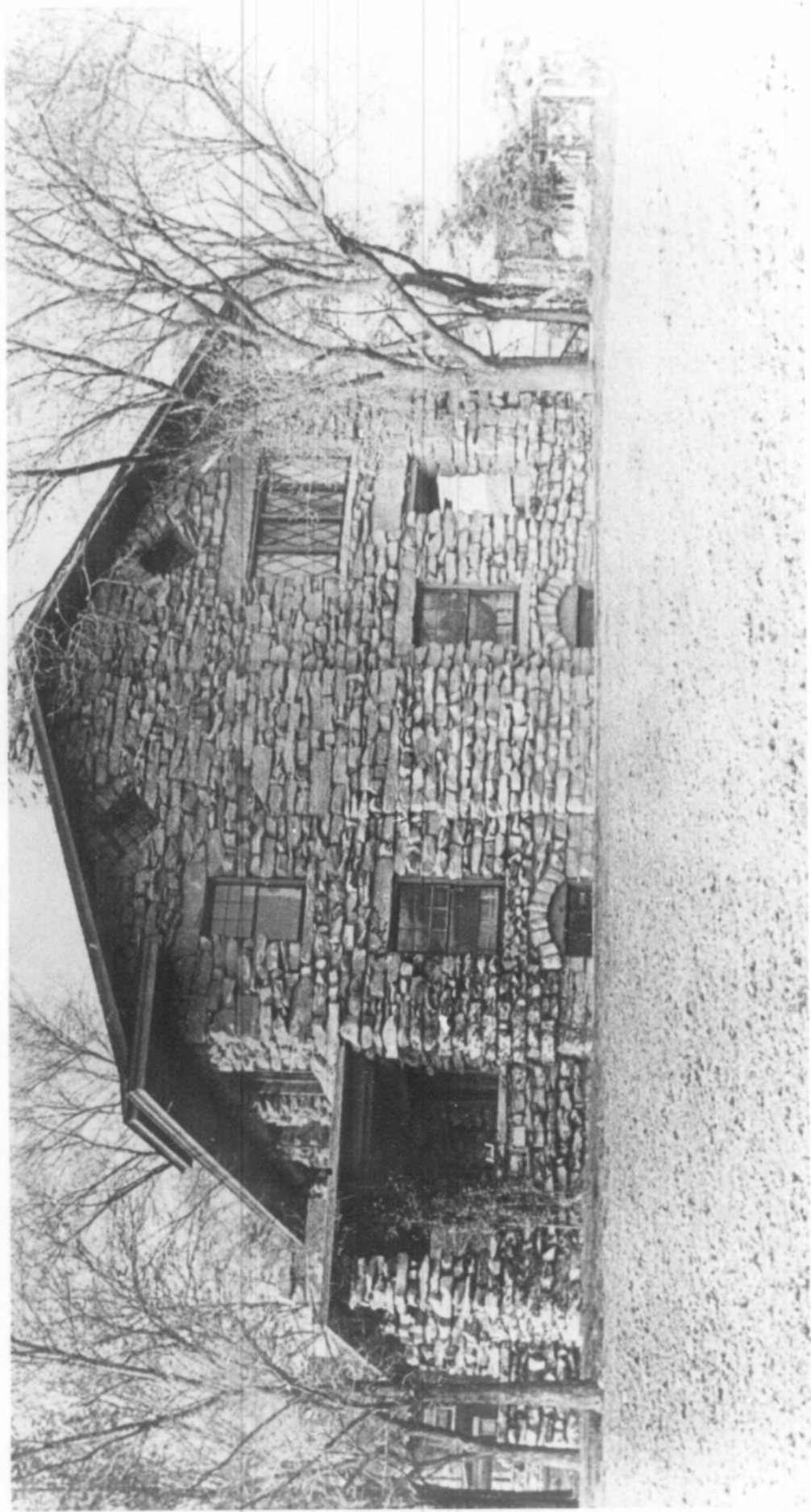
PHOTO #9



Gump, John & Abel, House  
Jackson County, Missouri;  
c. 1908

South facade looking north west  
Historic Photo #10  
Photographer unknown





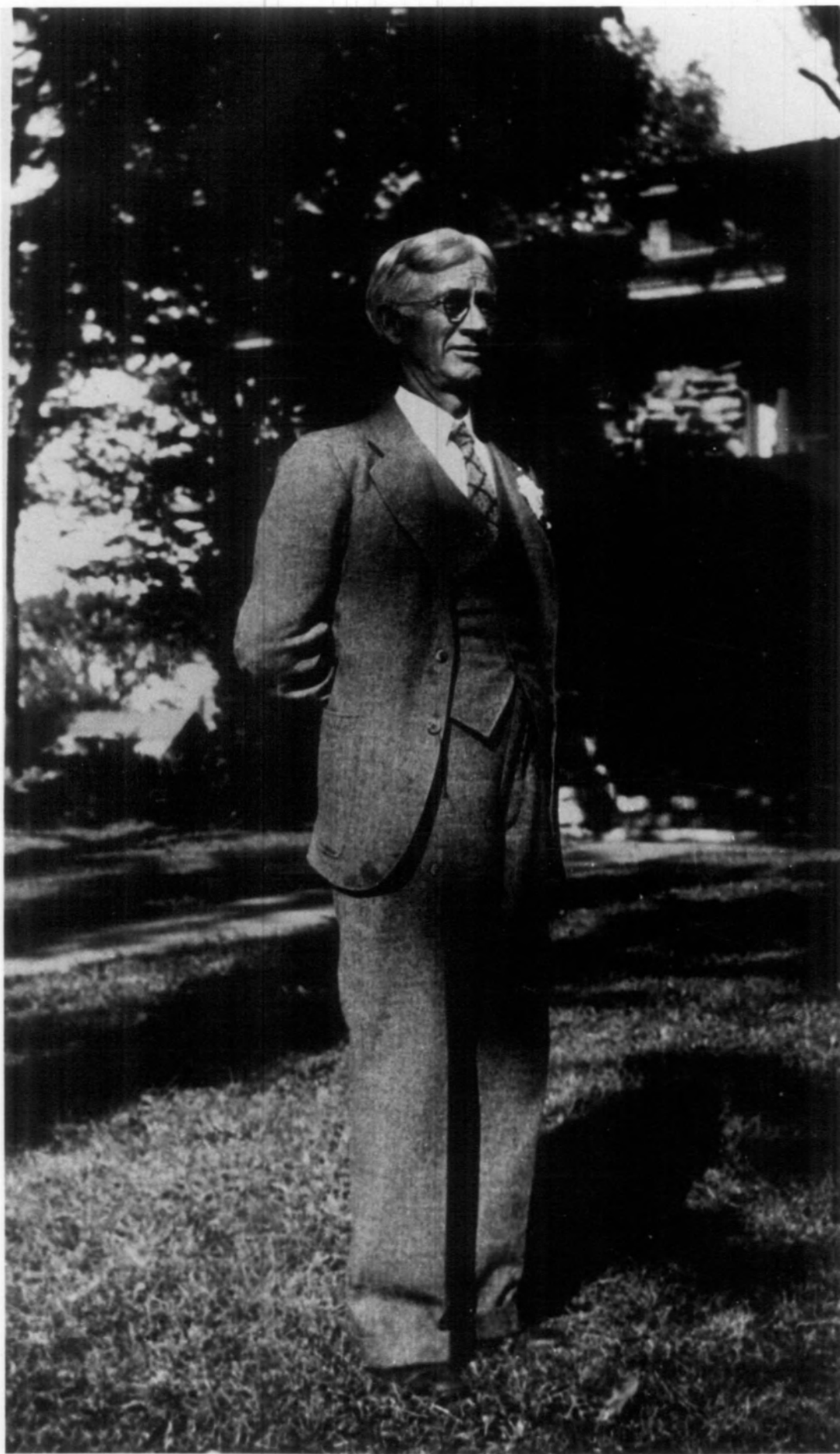
Georgen, John & Adele House  
Jackson County, Missouri

c 1908

John Georgen

Historic Photo #11

Photographer unknown



EXTRA  
PHOTOS

